



La Grande Ranger District

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
3502 Highway 30, La Grande, OR. 97850
(541) 963-7186

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Dear Forest User,

The La Grande Ranger District has recently completed a preliminary analysis for the **Two Eagle Vegetation Management Project**. The area being evaluated consists of approximately 7,007 acres in the West Eagle Creek, Upper Eagle Creek and Bennett Creek-Eagle Creek subwatersheds of the Eagle Creek watershed, all of which are on National Forest System (NFS) lands on the La Grande District. The project area is located at Township 6 South, Range 43 East approximately 20 miles southeast of the town of Union, Oregon west of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The planning area includes portions of the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Corridor (WSR) and numerous developed recreation facilities including seven recreation residences associated with Boulder Park Recreation Area and the historic Two Color Guard Station. The planning area is within Baker County and encompasses approximately 2,297 acres of the Eagle Creek/Tamarack CG wildland urban interface area (WUI). Within this WUI area there are numerous buildings and residences along with the above developed recreation facilities.

As a project or activity implementing the land management plan not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, this project is subject to subparts A and B of the project level pre-decisional administrative review process as described in 36 CFR 218.

Background

The planning area reflects landscape vegetation patterns shaped by past forest management and wildfire suppression activities. Past management included even aged regeneration harvests within the moist mixed conifer forest types and partial removal/intermediate thinning treatments on moist as well as drier upland forest types. Past human disturbances have altered the structure, composition and diversity of forest stands across the planning area resulting in a departure from expected historic forest conditions. An assessment of the historic range of variability (HRV) of forest structures indicate excess levels of mid-successional understory re-initiation structures and old forest multi-stratum structures as well as severely under-represented levels of late-successional old forest single stratum and early successional structures across all forest types. Old forest single stratum (OFSS) structures within the project area are significantly below HRV within all potential vegetation groups (PVG). The lack of this structural condition within the area has the potential to negatively impact plant and wildlife species dependent on OFSS habitat and also increases risk of loss of large trees and existing old forest multi-stratum stands to wildfire. Additionally, patches of cottonwood are experiencing conifer encroachment reducing the health and extent of important hardwood communities in the planning area.

Along with past harvest activities, decades of successful fire suppression has led to the development of denser forest conditions, increased proportions of shade tolerant/fire intolerant species and accumulation of fuels and understory conifers resulting in an increased wildfire and insect and disease risk within the planning area. Forest stands in the project area exhibit high levels (overstocked) of existing tree densities and approximately 46% of the planning area is characterized as fire condition class 2 or 3 indicating a significant departure from the project area's historic range of fire regimes. Insect activity associated with the fir engraver, Ips beetle, tussock moth, mountain pine beetle, and balsam woolly adelgid is present across the planning area and likely to increase due to a combination of high stand densities and impacts from drought conditions.

Northeast Oregon communities have a strong reliance on natural resources in the area and established infrastructures that benefit from resource management activities on public lands. Forest, ranching and recreational industries are key contributors to the local and regional economy and resource management opportunities afforded on public lands are an important part of maintaining and sustaining these industries and associated infrastructure.

Cohesive Wildfire Strategy

In response to requirements of the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Act of 2009, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) directed the development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (CWS).

The CWS is a collaborative process with active involvement of all levels of government and non-governmental organizations, as well as the public, to seek national, all-lands solutions to wildland fire management issues.

Four primary factors have been identified as presenting the greatest challenges and the greatest opportunities for making a positive difference in addressing complex wildfire issues. They are:

Restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes. The strategy must recognize the current lack of ecosystem health and variability of this issue from geographic area to geographic area. Because landscape conditions and needs vary depending on local climate and fuel conditions, among other elements, the strategy will address landscapes on a regional and sub-regional scale.

Creating fire-adapted communities. The strategy will offer options and opportunities to engage communities and work with them to become more resistant to wildfire threats and provide education and prevention messages targeted at creating defensible space, fuels reduction and improved structure access.

Safe and effective response to wildfires. This element considers the full spectrum of fire management activities and recognizes the differences in missions among local, state, tribal and Federal agencies. The strategy offers collaboratively developed methodologies to move forward and seeks opportunities to improve interagency wildland fire presence and response.

Establish a monitoring, evaluation, and review process. Evaluate the community fire plan progress, recommend changes as needed, and conduct monitoring of collaboratively developed projects.

The Two Eagle project aims to integrate CWS goals when evaluating location, extent and intensity of proposed vegetation and fuels treatments including integration with potential private forest land treatments within and adjacent to the planning area.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need is represented by the difference or “gap” between the existing condition and desired condition based on Forest Plan management direction. Evaluation of current vegetation, fuels, wildlife, aquatic and recreational conditions indicate the following areas of need:

- The departure of current forest conditions from expected historic conditions, creates a need to restore and promote forest structural and compositional conditions reflective of the HRV across the planning area
- Elevated risk of wildfire across nearly half of the project area and presence of important recreational and natural values at risk, indicates a need to enhance overall landscape resiliency to future wildfire and capitalize on the opportunity to apply cohesive wildfire strategy principles across National Forest System lands within and/or adjacent to WUIs, the wilderness, and the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor
- Increased stand densities and proportions of shade tolerant conifer species are inhibiting white bark pine establishment and development creating a need to maintain and enhance the representation of threatened white bark pine stands in the planning area
- Lack of wildfire and increased herbivory by domestic and native ungulates has reduced the amount and distribution of hardwood communities creating a need to restore hardwood communities and encourage hardwood recruitment in riparian habitats
- Past harvests, road building and wildfires have impacted local and landscape scale connectivity creating a need to maintain and enhance connectivity of ecosystems by providing corridors that will promote resilient and sustainable landscapes

- Increased wildfire risk and numbers of dead and dying trees along roads and in/around recreation facilities has created a need to enhance public safety for forest users
- Impacts from un-managed recreational activities (dispersed camping, ATV/OHV use) within the Eagle Creek corridor have created a need to reduce erosion and sedimentation associated with developed and dispersed campsites, and user created routes within the Eagle Creek riparian habitat conservation area
- Strong reliance of local communities and economies on National Forest lands creates a need to maintain and enhance local communities and economies by providing a diversity of resource management activities, recreational opportunities, commodity outputs, and ecosystem services from National Forest lands

Proposed Action

Treatments summarized in this Proposed Action are responsive to the purpose and need for the Two Eagle Project. Treatments are designed to meet the goals of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS) to restore and maintain landscapes, create fire adapted communities, and improve fire response times as well as move resource conditions towards desired conditions outlined in the forest plan and Eagle Creek WSR plan by:

- Accelerating development of stand structures toward HRVs
- Modifying fire behavior and intensity
- Creating and maintaining defensible fuel profile zones in strategic areas on Federal lands to aid future fire management efforts, and minimize natural resource impacts in the event of a wildfire
- Improving the sustainability of forested stands against insects and disease
- Increasing public and firefighter safety while protecting natural resource values in the event of a wildfire
- Providing for landscape and local connectivity corridors
- Enhancing management indicator species forage and security habitat
- Protecting and enhancing recreational, scenic, historic, cultural and aquatic values within the Eagle Creek WSR corridor
- Providing for commercial products, firewood, and employment opportunities for local economies
- Managing road systems in the project area to protect resources and provide for recreation, administrative and emergency access
- Identifying enhancement opportunities to improve the forest user experience and promote recreational safety

The following sections describe the various treatments proposed for the Two Eagle Vegetation Management project area.

Commercial Fuels Reduction & Vegetation Management Treatments

The following fuels reduction and vegetation management treatments are proposed within the project area to address the purpose and need (see attached maps):

Commercial Thinning Harvest (HTH)

This prescription is designed to reduce competition for site nutrients and concentrate growth potential toward the trees left on site. Approximately 355 acres would receive this treatment. Thinning from below can improve growing conditions, tree quality, and the future economic value of the stand. Treatment is accomplished by removing smaller over-topped trees, and poorly crowned intermediates and co-dominants which compete for resources and create ladder fuels into the canopies of mature trees. **Affected Units: 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 40, 41, 45, 48, 54, 86, 96.**

Shelterwood Harvest (HSH)

This prescription would occur on approximately 57 acres and involves harvest designed to facilitate the establishment of a new cohort of trees. Scattered overstory trees are retained to provide shade or site protection for the regenerating stand below and to meet green tree recruitment needs. Once established, the overstory trees can be removed to promote maximum growth and development of the regenerated understory, or retained for structural and habitat needs. This treatment would leave 12 trees per acre and would not exceed an opening of 40 acres per unit. Regeneration of these units would involve monitoring natural regeneration and inter planting where necessary. **Affected Units: 50, 118, 119, 120.**

Improvement Harvest (HIM)

Approximately 1,050 acres would receive an improvement harvest. Activities in this prescription include thinning and removing undesirable trees characterized by poor form, damaged condition, or ecologically inappropriate species within a stand for the purpose of improving growth, composition and quality of the remaining stand.

Cutting may be focused on converting a stand from a multi-story canopy to a single story canopy where site conditions allow, aiding in the restoration of deficient OFSS conditions across the project area. This prescription promotes restoring historic densities and encourages a shift in species composition toward the historical range. **Affected Units: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 30, 31, 34, 36, 38, 42, 43, 49, 51, 52, 55, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 71, 74, 75, 80, 85, 88, 89, 97, 98, 116, 117.**

Patch Openings (HPO)

This prescription, covering approximately 35 acres, is designed to reduce crown fuels by increasing the presence of lighter crowned tree species, and to accelerate the formation of structural variation in currently homogenous stands. This prescription would create small canopy openings varying in size from 4 to 6 acres with a focus on promoting whitebark pine and western larch to improve the stand's resilience to wildfire, insect and disease outbreaks. Approximately 10% of these units would have small openings, and the rest of the unit would be a matrix of thinned and untreated areas. This treatment would replicate natural disturbance patterns helping enhance visual and structural diversity in currently dense, homogenous stand conditions. Surface fuel loadings would be reduced to the forest plan minimums through removal, mastication, grapple piling, or hand piling. Planting may be used in patch openings to supplement natural regeneration and meet stocking requirements.

Affected Units: 78, 79.

Riparian Patch Openings (RHC-HPO)

Outside of a minimum one-site tree potential (80-100 feet) no-treatment stream buffer, co-dominant trees and ladder fuels would be removed in small patches around cottonwoods and western larch. Cutting would be by hand treatment only and create canopy openings around western larch and cottonwood (clear approximately 20 feet around desired trees). Treatment would occur on approximately 7 acres. Felled trees would be lopped and scattered. Tree removal would be allowed by mechanical equipment that does not leave existing roads. Materials under 12 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) would be hand piled outside of the RHCA in units 112 and 113, while slash would be left on site in unit 95. This treatment contributes to ecosystem stability by reducing stand densities around hardwoods and western larch and removing fuel loadings and ladder fuels contributing to increased risk of uncharacteristic wildfire intensity and severity within riparian areas. **Affected Units: 95, 112, 113**

Table 1. Commercial Treatment Acre Totals by Silvicultural Prescription

Prescription	Acres
Commercial thinning – HTH	355
Shelterwood Harvest – HSH	57
Improvement harvest – HIM	1,050
Patch Openings – HPO	35
Riparian HPO – RHC HPO	7
Total Commercial Treatment	1,504

Non-Commercial Fuels Reduction & Vegetation Management Treatments

Fuels Reduction Hand Work Only (RWF)

The areas proposed for this type of treatment are generally located adjacent to private inholdings, WUI areas, and along key strategic road and ridge systems within the project area. This prescription would apply approximately 655 acres of treatment designed to remove ladder fuels and manage understory tree density at appropriate levels using hand treatment only. Ladder fuels are defined as trees less than 9 inches DBH growing under the drip line (radius of the canopy) of the dominant and co-dominant trees within the unit. Left untreated these trees provide a ladder for flames to reach into the crowns of larger trees, ultimately increasing the probability of a stand replacing crown fire and loss of large trees. Excess dead and down fuels would also be piled and burned.

Affected units are: 3, 12, 35, 37, 57, 59, 69, 90, 121, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 135, 138, 145, 147, 148, 149, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161.

Pre-commercial Thinning (PCT)

Manual or mechanical pre-commercial thinning of selected trees in a young stand would occur on 383 acres with an emphasis on variable spacing (14-20 feet between trees) retaining dominant, healthy trees. Approximately 10% within each unit would be retained untreated to provide for wildlife habitat needs. Preferred species to leave on site include western larch, ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. Slash would be treated through slash busting, piling and/or burning, or would be lopped and scattered and remain on site to promote nutrient cycling of the

residual fuels. The resulting treatment area would reduce the wildfire risk, increase growth potential, and decrease the risk for insect and disease transmission. **Affected units are: 53, 63, 92, 93, 94, 102, 115, 139, 140, 150, 151, 152, 153, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166.**

Table 2. Non-commercial Treatment Acre Totals by Silviculture Prescription

Prescription	Acres
Whip Felling - RWF	655
Pre-commercial Thinning - PCT	383
Total Non-commercial Treatment	1,038

Fuels Blocks - Prescribed Burning

Approximately 3,465 acres of prescribed burning primarily on southerly facing slopes would be implemented over the next 10 years after harvest activities have concluded. Low to moderate intensity prescribed burning would reduce litter, duff, and 0-3 inch surface fuels and raise the canopy base height and wildfire resiliency of residual trees. Burning would also reduce understory stocking levels and promote the development of seral species while enhancing forage and browse for domestic and wildlife species. **Affected units are: 601, 602, 603, 604, 605.**

Table 3. Prescribed burning by Fuels Specialist Prescription

Prescribed Burning	
Burn Block	Total Acres
601	105
602	639
603	1,436
604	435
605	850
Total	3,465

Mechanical fire lines

Mechanical fire lines (less than 2 feet wide) would be constructed between road segments to provide containment lines prior to unit ignition. Burning along private land boundaries would be coordinated with adjacent landowners.

Other Considerations

Riparian habitat conservation area (RHCA) – With the exception of the treatments described in the RHC-HPO (units 112 and 113) and cottonwood enhancement (unit 84) no activity buffers would be utilized for all treatment units with streams within or adjacent to their boundaries.

Snags in Harvest and Fuel Reduction Units – With the exception of an occasional snag removed for safety or construction clearing, no snags ≥ 12 inches DBH would be removed within these units.

Existing standing large snags (>12 inches DBH) would be protected during firing operations through avoidance or fuels distribution requirements (FDR) as practical. Trees killed through project implementation of prescribed fire will be left for wildlife snags, unless they pose a safety hazard to roads, the public, or project personnel.

Large diameter trees – With the exception of hazard trees, no trees greater than 21 inches in diameter would be removed in order to maintain existing levels of large diameter trees across the project area.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), Boulder Park Cabins and Private Lands – Proposed treatments within and around the WUI, Boulder Park Cabins, recreation facilities and private land boundaries would include fuels treatment areas along roads and land boundaries for use as a defensible fuels profile zone. This noncommercial treatment would remove ladder fuels, reduce overall fuel loadings, and retain the most fire resistant tree species to aid in future fire suppression and structure protection efforts. Fuels less than 9 inches DBH would be cut using hand methods only, hand piled, and burned as soon as practical.

Hazard trees and fuel loading around cabins and other structures would be evaluated during harvest activities and identified for treatments to improve defensible space around the structures and the safety of firefighters in the event of a wildfire.

Within the Boulder Park Campground and trailhead area, a visual vegetative buffer would be retained between the cabins and the 7755 road to protect the privacy of cabin owners and assist with dust abatement to the recreation residences.

Connective Corridor Units – Maintaining structural complexity is an important goal for stands and areas identified as connective corridors. Snags, large down wood, and multiple canopy layers (if appropriate for the site) would be maintained in units identified as part of a connectivity corridor. Basal area would be maintained within the upper half of the management zone, which would approximate canopy closures in the upper 1/3 of site potential. Stocking levels would be managed near the upper management zones except where tree quality and crown conditions are such that this level of stocking is unattainable. In these areas, 20% of the stand would be retained in untreated clumps. Trees with as little as 20% live crown would be retained if needed to maintain basal area levels. All snags greater than or equal to 12 inches DBH would be retained. Down logs would be retained at the following levels:

- 200 lineal feet per acre
- Minimum lengths of logs 20 feet or largest available
- Minimum of 12 inches small end diameter logs or largest available

Affected units: 37, 50, 60, 74, 80, 89, 138, 149, 158

Roadside Hazard Trees - Danger trees (standing trees that present a hazard to people due to conditions such as, but not limited to, deterioration or physical damage to the root system, trunk, stem, or limbs and the direction of the lean of the tree would allow that tree to reach the roadway if it fell) would be cut along all haul roads (approximately 15 trees/mi). If the trees are within no-activity RHCA buffers as described previously or needed to meet down wood requirements they would be cut and left on site. If they are outside of those areas or not required to be retained for other resource needs and are of commercial value, they may be removed as part of a timber sale.

Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Corridor Prescriptions - Activities within the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor consist of approximately 150 acres of prescribed fire, 363 acres of commercial treatments, and 92 acres of non-commercial thinning. Treatment prescriptions include:

- **Non-commercial treatments (RWF)** – This treatment aims to create gaps within dense homogenous stands by clearing 20-30 feet around western larch and Douglas-fir in order reduce competition, enhance regeneration opportunities, and reduce fuel loadings. Cut trees would either be grapple piled where they can be reached from the road, or hand piled. No commercial removal would occur.
- **Commercial treatments (HIM, HTH, RHC HPO)** – Commercial treatments include commercial thinning from below or improvement cut (see HTH and HIM described above) with the following design criteria integrated to address requirements outlined in the Eagle Creek WSR plan.
 - Within 100 feet of the 7755 road, treatments would retain stands at a higher density (upper management zone) and then feather back away from the road to the lower management zone.
 - Stumps within 100 feet of the road would be no taller than annual grass height up to a maximum of 6 inches.
 - Harvest activities would utilize existing skid trails/user built roads and utilize low impact harvest methods such as shovel logging or use of cut to length and forwarding harvest systems
 - Skid trails would be located parallel to the 7755 road to minimize visibility of trails.
 - All skid trails would be rehabilitated at the completion of yarding activities.
 - User built roads on the west side of the 7755 road used during harvest and fuel reduction activities would be decommissioned or evaluated for potential retention for use as dispersed camping sites.
 - Burn piles would be located to minimize roadside visibility and burned as soon as practical.
- **Cottonwood Enhancement** – Cottonwood is an underrepresented hardwood across the project planning area. A unique mature cottonwood stand covering approximately 1 acre is the target for this prescription, which aims to enhance cottonwood habitat and resources by removing competing co-dominant conifer

species within the unit. The released cottonwood stand would then be able to naturally propagate the next generation of trees from local seed or sprouting. Only those trees accessible from the 7755 road along the west side of the unit would be cut and removed. On the east side of the unit only those trees reached from an existing user built road would be cut and removed. A no activity buffer of 50' from the perennial non-fish bearing stream adjacent to the unit would be maintained. Residual slash would be lopped and scattered to a depth of 18". Monitoring sites with photo points would be established to monitor cottonwood response to these treatments. Monitoring would occur every year for the first 3 years and then every 5 years after that.

Treatments within the WSR corridor are designed to maintain and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values (recreation, scenery, geology/paleontology, fisheries and historic cultural resources) within each of these sections.

Affected units: 5, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 32, 33, 40, 41, 45, 48, 54, 59, 64, 66, 74, 84, 123, 124, 131, 156.

Removal Systems Summary

Proposed harvest treatments are estimated to result in the removal of approximately 4.5 million board feet of saw and non-saw material using the following yarding systems.

- Skyline based yarding systems - 321 acres
- Ground based yarding systems - 1,154 acres
- Winch - 23 acres

No new permanent road construction is proposed with this project. In addition to regular road maintenance activities on roads which will be used to facilitate harvest activities, approximately 18.25 miles of road reconstruction/maintenance would be proposed in the following categories:

- 16.55 miles - Specified road maintenance to re-open roads which have grown closed.
- 1.7 miles – Resource Protection Reconstruction to fix/prevent sediment issues and facilitate timber haul.
- Reinstall approximately 8-10 culverts

Approximately 5.25 miles of temporary road construction are proposed to facilitate harvest systems. Approximately one-third of those miles are on existing wheel tracks on the ground and would require very little in the way of ground disturbance to be used for harvest activities. Temp road 24 (T-24) provides access to dispersed camping within the WSR corridor, and would remain open after harvest activities. The user built section at the end of T-24, behind the primary dispersed campsite, would be reclaimed and fenced off to prevent further resource damage from ATV travel. All other temporary roads would be decommissioned after use by implementing some or all of the following activities: installation of erosion control devices, ripping to reduce soil compaction, seeding with native species, and camouflaging roads to discourage further use.

An estimated 16.4 miles of currently closed roads would be re-opened to facilitate harvest and fuel reduction activities. In general, currently closed roads opened to facilitate project activities would be reclosed at the conclusion of fuel reduction/harvest activities (refer to the post sale road management plan section below and attached map). If winter logging is done using the 6700, 7700, and 7755 roads, use would be coordinated with the District Recreation Manager to designate an alternative snowmobile route while log haul is occurring.

The perched culvert on the 7700-450 road has been identified as a fish passage barrier. This culvert would either be reset or an approach to the perch would be created to allow for fish passage to high quality habitat above the culvert.

Post-Sale Road Management Plan (refer to attached map)

A road management plan (refer to attached map) has been developed for the Two Eagle project area. The project area encompasses a portion of the Bald Angel Travel Management Area where motor vehicle use is restricted to designated roads only. Road management within the Bald Angel closure area would not be changed by the Two Eagle project. Motorized access within this area for layout, contractors, and sale/contract administrators will be managed by road use permits issued by the La Grande Ranger District.

In general, the current open road system will remain following implementation of the Two Eagle Vegetation Management project with the exception of the roads below which will have the following changes:

- Road 7700-460 is an important access road within WUI areas which is currently closed that would be closed again with a gate following use in this project
- A short user built section of the 6700-830 which travels up a steep slope and creating soil erosion and compaction issues would be decommissioned.
- The 6700-064 and 7700-533 roads are currently open to the public and provide ditch service access. The 6700-064 travels through important wildlife source habitat and a designated old growth area. The 7700-533 fords West Eagle Creek impairing water quality and fish habitat. These roads would be managed with a gate to allow access for fire suppression and ditch maintenance while reducing impacts to important wildlife and aquatic species and their habitat.
- With the exception of the roads described above, any road currently closed by gate or barricade used to facilitate harvest/fuel reduction activities would be re-closed at the conclusion of harvest activities within the units they access.
- Roads 6700-050, 6700-064, 6700-125, 6700-126, 6700-133, 6700-141, 6700-351, 6700-839, 7700-451, 7700-452, 7700-453, 7700-455, 7700-456, 7700-460, 7700-473, 7700-474, 7700-492, 7700-493, 7700-537, 7700-539, 7700-556, 7755-050 totaling approximately 9.95 miles would be decommissioned and removed from the transportation system. These roads have been identified as either duplicate access or no longer needed on the landscape for resource management and recreation access and would be decommissioned, returned to resource production, and removed from the road system. 5.85 miles of these roads are currently grown in and have not received any use in the last 20+ years. These grown in/naturally reclaimed roads would not be disturbed, but would have signs removed and roads removed from forest maps.

Opportunities for Enhancement

The following proposed enhancements would improve the forest user experience and promote the health and safety of selected areas within the project area boundary.

Campsite Improvement

There is currently a high use of unmanaged dispersed campsites adjacent to Eagle Creek within the Two Eagle Project Area. Some of these sites are actively introducing sediment into the waterway, while others are accessed through sensitive or wet areas, or located within stands of trees that present hazards to public safety.

Enhancement opportunities with this project entail formalizing the best campsites as-is, creating alternate access points for others, and closing some that are underutilized and/or cannot be accessed without sustaining deleterious environmental effects. Additionally, the project proposes to reduce on-going negative impacts to the Two Color Campground through placement of boulder barriers to confine ATV and other motorized uses to the existing roadways.

Interpretive Site Creation

Harvest improvement unit 5 off of the 6700 road offers the opportunity to create an interpretive site explaining the historic and cultural significance of the Phillips-Ingle ditch. The construction of this ditch shares a cross-cultural narrative with Chinese immigrants and gold miners. This interpretive site would serve as a source of information to shed light on the evolution of this ditch from servicing mining needs over a century ago to supplying irrigation demands today. The instillation of this site would highlight some of the WSR's outstanding and remarkable values.

Harvest improvement unit 9 off of the 6700-132 road has an outstanding viewpoint that could be improved and made into an interpretive site after harvest activities are complete. Designating a viewpoint to overlook the Eagle Creek drainage would improve safety, as people could pull into an established turnout instead of stopping at an unfavorable spot on the heavily utilized 6700 road. Trees removed from this unit would extend the viewing range enhancing the visual diversity of the area. This is an exceptional opportunity to explain the area's unique natural and cultural history.

RHCA HPO units 112 and 113 present an opportunity to highlight the benefits of riparian habitat management and cottonwood enhancement. There is an existing pullout off of the 7700-533 road, eliminating the need for any new road construction or parking areas. Additionally, improving this pullout would afford the opportunity to rehabilitate and restrict access to a river ford in the local area ultimately protecting the stream from sedimentation and restoring critical fish habitat.

Meadow Restoration

The meadow behind Two Color Guard Station has been utilized by motorized vehicles as a travel route to access the river. The meadow has received extensive damage from ATV use, and is in need of restoration activities including exclusion of motorized activities and laying patches of native sod in the downcut areas running through the meadow. To restore and preserve the scenic integrity and species diversity of the meadow, an estimated 40-50 foot section of buck and rail fence would replace the existing primitive barrier behind the guard station parking lot which is currently being navigated around. Walking access to the river would remain unchanged. Additionally, equipment or hand tools would be used to scrap sod from local materials and strategically place sod mats throughout the downcut channel to slow water flows, disperse water, and backfill sediment.

Another wet meadow along the 7755-075 has been damaged by motorized use and would benefit from restoration. Proposed restoration activities include using low ground pressure equipment to scrap sod mats from areas near the decommissioned road and use sod mats to fill the downcut tire ruts going through the meadow. This would slow down water energy and help disperse water back across the meadow and also enable sediment to fill in behind the sod. The nearby fuels treatments would also aid in the restoration effort by removing conifers that have encroached into the meadow and compete for moisture.

Road Rehabilitation

Numerous sites with user built roads and unauthorized use on closed roads have been identified in the project area, and their use has been determined to be causing varying levels of resource damage. Addressing the access points and returning roads to their proper management level will have benefits to fish, streams, wildlife, vegetation, scenic integrity, and overall recreational experience. Plans to correct the issues include:

- Establish effective closure of 7700-470 road. This road is currently barricaded a quarter mile from the 7700 junction, but users have continued to access this road beyond the closure with motorized vehicles. Reinforcing this closure would reduce potential for motor vehicle access into the wilderness, and protect sensitive meadows located along the road.
- 7700-539 road. This road is currently closed and would be decommissioned before the ford in the stream to protect fish habitat and water quality.
- 7755-075 road – first 200 feet of this road would be kept for access to a dispersed campsite, while the remainder of the road would be decommissioned to protect the wet meadow this road travels through.
- Close access to three user built roads off of the 7755 road that lead into inventoried roadless areas.

Whitebark Pine Restoration – Whitebark pine (listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act) can be found at very low levels within the project area. Treatment within the following units are designed to create small canopy openings to promote the growth and vigor of whitebark pine and enhance its resiliency to insect and disease outbreaks and wildfire. This treatment would replicate natural disturbances to the vegetation resulting in a beneficial effect to scenic values.

If any white bark pine, *Pinus albicaulis*, trees are found inside other harvest units they would be protected. White bark pine would be marked with the leave tree mark, to insure that the tree would not be cut. Also any close (<10' horizontal distance from the white bark pine) operational skidding or forwarding would be avoided when practical.

Affected units: 58, 63, 78

Public Safety – Firearm use is a prohibited activity in established campgrounds as well as across or linearly to designated trails, but recent violations have raised concern among Boulder Park campsite users and cabin owners alike. The 7755 would be signed one half mile from the Boulder Park Campground to indicate Forest Service policy and guidelines about firearm use to help inform the public, prevent future violations and protect public safety.

The Phillips-Ingle ditch is being used as a primary travel way for ATV users and poses a significant risk to public safety. The access points into the ditch are steep embankments posing increased danger to ATV users. Additionally, the unregulated use of motorized vehicles in these ditches increases sedimentation in the water, compromises ditch banks putting the ditch structure at risk for overtopping and increases maintenance needs, liability and costs for the ditch company. Additionally, ditch maintenance activities puts users at risk during construction-related activities due to rocks or other debris rolling down hills into roadways. A gate and signage near commonly used access points would be implemented to correct these safety concerns including temporary signage during ditch maintenance activities when there is potential to impact a major road or other publicly accessible areas.

Fish Habitat Enhancement – Existing points of diversion for the Phillips-Ingle ditch are un-screened allowing fish to be entrained within the ditch. There is an opportunity to work cooperatively with ditch users to modernize head gates and/or install fish screens to alleviate the risk to fish inadvertently accessing the ditch and improve operations and maintenance of the ditch.

Resource and Management Concerns

Forest Plan direction, Endangered Species Act (ESA), public input and National Policy have led the Forest Service Planning Team to consider the following preliminary issues associated with activities in the Two Eagle Vegetation Management project area:

1. **Fire Behavior** – Surface and ladder fuels have increased, and continue to increase as a result of suppression activities. Management designed to reduce hazardous fuels would modify fire behavior thus reducing risk to property and resources including downstream water quality and quantity while increasing fire suppression opportunities.
2. **Forest Health/Sustainability** – The area has high levels of overstocked stands which will become prone to mortality from insects and disease if left unmanaged.
3. **Economics** – The area is characterized by small materials, steep terrain, and difficult/expensive logging systems which will make it challenging for the value of the product removed to support the logging systems needed for removal resulting in a potential deficit sale.
4. **Landscape Connectivity/Patterns** – Management indicator species use specific areas for movement between habitats and to support their needs. These areas need to be considered in treatment design to protect their functionality.
5. **LOS Deficit** – Single story old forest levels are significantly below HRV within the project area while multi-story old forests are well represented providing an opportunity to accelerate creation of old forest single story where site conditions allow.

Implementation of this project is scheduled to begin in 2020.

Comments

The Two Eagle Vegetation Management project is currently a proposal and not a decision. Your comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal and develop alternatives that are responsive to the identified issues. Written comments are those submitted to the responsible official (District Ranger) during a designated opportunity for public participation such as this scoping period. Specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. Although comments are welcome at any time, in order to be eligible to participate in the Objection process they must be received or postmarked during this scoping period which will end on December 29, 2017. Comments provided on this project will become a matter of public record.

Written comments should be addressed to Bill Gamble, District Ranger, La Grande Ranger District, 3502 Highway 30, La Grande, OR, 97850 or by email at bgamble@fs.fed.us. If you have any questions additional information can be provided by contacting me at (541) 962-8582.

Sincerely,



Bill Gamble
District Ranger
La Grande Ranger District

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